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ABSTRACT

This book portrays San Ildefonso Pueblo on the east bank of the Rio Grande river in New Mexico through the lives of Sonja, age 10, and her sister Desiree, age 8. Growing up in San Ildefonso Pueblo, the girls enjoy the same activities as other American girls, such as basketball, cheerleading, playing video games, and sending e-mail. But they also learn their Indian heritage. Their family preserves a central place for traditional customs, prayers, and reverence for the natural world. The girls speak their native Tewa language, listen to tribal stories, and learn traditional pottery-making and bread-baking from their mother and grandmother. Both girls have been dancing at Pueblo ceremonial dances since they were 2 years old. The dances are silent prayers that have been practiced for 10,000 years. The girls practice often and follow strict rules for ceremonial dance preparations. Fifty-four color photographs provide a personal tour of Sonja and Desiree's lives, including their pueblo, school, home, family activities, the Pueblo village at Bandelier National Monument (abandoned since the 1500s), and ceremonial dress and dance. The girls are proud of their Indian heritage and plan to pass it on to their children. The book is a reflection on the rewards and challenges of keeping traditional culture alive in the modern world. (TD)

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